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October 30, 2007

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
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From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

MODIFICATION OF NORTHPOINTE SYSTEM TO INCLUDE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S SPECIAL HANDLING CODES

On November 8, 2006, your Board instructed the Chief Executive Office (CEO), formerly Chief Administrative Office (CAO), to meet with Mr. Merrick Bobb (Special Counsel) to review his recommendation that the Northpointe System be modified to include special handling codes. On April 25, 2007, the CEO staff and Special Counsel met to discuss the recommendation. Special Counsel concluded, and we concur, the current process will remain intact with the caveat that a written policy be established to ensure all inmates are housed appropriately as determined by the Northpointe System and special handling codes are considered in conjunction with the security level determined by the Northpointe System.

BACKGROUND

In Special Counsel's annual report, he recommends the Sheriff's Department create a centralized classification and housing unit to assist them in managing their daily inmate population. He recommends this unit assume all decision-making authority regarding inmate security classification and housing assignments. By doing so, the Department will minimize risks to staff, other inmates, and the County.

The Sheriff's Department currently determines an inmate's security level classification through a computer-based decision tree known as the Jail Inmate Classification System (JICS). Special Counsel also found the Department currently uses special handle codes to identify specific needs (e.g., housing, movement, or medical) of an individual inmate.

However, these special handling codes pre-date Northpointe's JICS. As a result, Special Counsel recommended the Department modify the current system of security level assignments and special handling codes to create a more unified classification system. The Department does not support this recommendation.

MERRICK BOBB'S RECOMMENDATION

The Sheriff's Department eliminates special handling codes, where feasible, and can customize JICS to include those which may be absent from its software.

Special Counsel determined the Sheriff's Department is currently using two (2) freestanding systems to determine an inmate's housing. A review of jail riots found inmates with different classification levels were being housed in the same cell, dorm, or housing module. Special Counsel concluded that it was the result of special handling codes overriding the Northpointe System's classification system. He is of the opinion that if the Department merged the two (2) separate systems a more effective classification and housing system will emerge and inmate-on-inmate violence, riots, and other types of misconduct will be minimized.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE

The Sheriff's Department disagrees with Special Counsel's recommendation for the following reasons:

- Customizing JICS will not result in a more accurate classification of the Los Angeles County jail population.
- The terms "security level classification" and "special handle designations" are two (2) completely different concepts. The Northpointe System is designed to predict an inmate tendency toward violence. Special handling codes relate to facts and situations specific to an individual inmate.

However, the Sheriff's Department does concur that a single system within the jails to address special handling codes and security levels is the ultimate goal.

SPECIAL HANDLING CODES

A code which identifies facts and/or circumstances (i.e., a need or condition) specific to an individual inmate that requires special attention by staff. Examples of special handling codes include, but are not limited to the following:

Codes

K-1	Law enforcement officials and their relatives
K-2 through K-5	Keep-away from another inmate
K-6	Administrative segregation
K-10	Highly dangerous or a target for assault as a result of their fame or notoriety

Wrist Bands

Yellow	K-1 and K-6
Blue	K-2 through K-5 designations
Red	K-10 (escorted at all times)

In summary, a special handle code is a unique fact about a specific inmate being brought to the attention of the jail personnel.

NORTHPOINTE SYSTEM – Jail Information and Classification System (JICS)

- A tool used to assist jail administrators and staff in assessing and identifying a dangerous or potentially problem inmate in order to make appropriate housing, supervision, medical care, and treatment decisions.
- It requires a review of the inmate's current/past convictions; current/past institutional behavior; pending charges or holds in other jurisdictions (if any); sentenced or un-sentenced; and/or any other information, including special conditions, that may be deemed appropriate with regard to an inmate's personal security or the security of the facility. It aids jail staff in determining if an inmate will present a threat to themselves, staff, other inmates, or the community.
- JICS determines an inmate's security level (maximum, medium, or minimum) with each being housed separately from each other if the facility design and cell space permit.

The Sheriff's Department's inmate security levels are as follows:

- Low Security Inmates (1, 2, 3, 4)

- Medium Security Inmates (5, 6, 7)
- Maximum Security Inmates (8, 9)

In summary, the Northpointe System provides an educated guess of an inmate's behavior based upon certain criteria.

EXAMPLES OF HOW SPECIAL HANDLE CODES AND SECURITY LEVELS DIFFER

If a famous person, such as a movie star, is in custody for a relatively minor offense, the Northpointe System would assign the inmate a security level of low. However, a special handle code of K-10 would also be assigned due to the inmate's notoriety, which would dictate they receive special housing and transportation.

An inmate who is wheelchair bound is classified by the Northpointe System with a security level of medium. However, a special handle code is also needed to identify the inmate is confined to a wheelchair, especially when arranging transportation for their court appearances.

CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles County's Jail System houses an enormous and diverse jail population. Using "only" the Northpointe System security level designations to classify and describe inmates within the Sheriff's Department's custody would be highly difficult. Based on the information provided above, there appears to be no need to customize the Northpointe System to include special handling codes since they differ significantly from the security levels currently in place.

The Sheriff's Department has developed a new Special Handle policy which has been approved by the Custody Operations and Correctional Services Divisions chiefs. Staff have received training and the new policy was implemented in April 2007.

It was agreed during an April 25, 2007, meeting that the Sheriff's Department would include language in their new policy to address Special Counsel's concern that special handling codes are considered in conjunction with the security level of an inmate. As a result, the following language will be added to the new policy:

"Every special handle determination requires a review of an inmate security level to ensure it is appropriate."

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The Sheriff's Department indicates the new policy has significantly reduced the total number of K-10 keep-away inmates which was one of Special Counsel's recommendations. Additionally, the Sheriff's Department indicates they have a much better handle on identifying special inmates, particularly when making housing assignments and preparations for transporting them to court. The Sheriff's Department has instituted an electronic process for the assignment of special handling codes, which have resulted in a more efficient operation.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Deputy Chief Executive Officer Doyle Campbell, at (213) 893-3274.

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JW:SW:GY:yjf

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